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ABSTRACT

This student guide for a program on discipline gives some perspective to the subject and some of the different discipline techniques available to parents, as well as guidelines for deciding among the different techniques. Designed around a magazine format to allow maximum flexibility to different groups using the materials, the guide is divided into seven sections: (1) an overview of the theme and contents; (2) a summary of the major learnings of the theme; (3) feature articles containing the major content and including practical suggestions for parents; (4) a film review section which includes a synopsis of the accompanying film program and a related discussion question; (5) three activities aimed at both individual and group participation; (6) a selection of field activities, discussion questions, and research topics designed to reinforce the ideas presented in the articles and meet the needs of a wide variety of classroom groups; and (7) a bibliography for further reading on the theme. (Author/JEG)

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THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT



Spare the Rod Student Guide

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FROM THE EDITORS

Discipline is one of the most important jobs parents have. Children have to learn how to take care of themselves and live in a world with other people, and it is parents who teach children these things.

There are probably more books written on discipline than any other aspect of parenting. This reflects the importance of the subject, and the concern parents have about it. Sometimes though, all this information and advice can be confusing. With so many different viewpoints, how are parents to know what is best for their children?

This booklet attempts to give some perspective to the subject of discipline, and some of the different discipline techniques available to parents. Most important, it provides guidelines for deciding among these different techniques.

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THE BIG IDEAS



Discipline should meet both the present and future needs of children. In the short run, children need help controlling their behavior. In the long run, they need to become responsible for their own behavior.



The two goals of discipline are more likely to be achieved when parents respond to the causes of behaviors as well as to the behaviors themselves.



Both goals of discipline are best accomplished when parents use a variety of discipline techniques to meet the needs of different situations.



I am, indeed, a king,
because I know how
to rule myself.

— Pietro Aretino

DISCIPLINE: THE GREAT DEBATE

Discipline is needed.

There's no doubt about that. Society could not exist if people acted without regard for others. Children are unhappy if they can't control their own impulses or tell right from wrong.

Yet, there is probably no single issue that arouses controversy and concerns parents as much as discipline. To discipline or not to discipline? And if so, how? And when? These are questions that puzzle many parents.

This concern is not new. There has always been controversy about the subject of discipline. In recent years, however, we have learned a great deal about children — about their needs, feelings, differences, and the tasks they must master. Parents and experts are beginning to agree on methods of discipline that take into account the nature and needs of children.

Some parents still wonder and worry, though. This booklet explores some of the questions that parents still ask in the great debate about discipline.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY DISCIPLINE?

— I. M. Wondering
Parentsville, U.S.A.

Much of the confusion about discipline stems from a misunderstanding about what the word itself means. For many people, the word "discipline" has negative associations. To some, it may even mean the same thing as punishment.

If we look at the source of the word "discipline," we find that its meaning is positive. "Discipline" comes from the word "disciple," someone who follows the teachings of another person:

Discipline means a learning experience.

Not punishment. Not tears. It means a chance to learn how to live in a social world. Discipline is not something parents do to children. It is something they do *with* children.

WHAT DO PARENTS TEACH BY DISCIPLINE?

— B. Cleer
Central City, U.S.A.

SELF-CONTROL.

RESPONSIBILITY.

SELF-DISCIPLINE.

These are the ultimate goals of discipline. Children must learn to govern their own behavior. They have to know how to make decisions and take care of themselves. They have to learn how to rely on themselves rather than parents or other adults to tell them what to do.

When people do things because they have been told to do so by someone else, we say they are governed by **OUTER CONTROLS**. When people act in ways that they themselves have decided are right, they are following **INNER CONTROLS**:

The long-range goal of discipline is to help children move from the outer controls of parents, teachers, and other adults to their own inner controls.

Through discipline, parents help the child take over.

Like any other area of growth, however, developing self-discipline takes time. While this process is taking place, parents have to deal with children's day-to-day behaviors. If a child is about to run into the street or hit another child with a baseball bat, there's no time to wait for the long-term goal of discipline. Parents have to stop such behaviors immediately:

The short-range goal of discipline is to control children's behaviors on a daily basis.

While young children are still learning self-control, they need to be protected from hurting themselves and other people. They must be shown appropriate ways to behave.

Fortunately, the long- and short-range goals of discipline can be worked on at the same time. In fact, the most effective methods of discipline are those that take both goals into account.

WHY DO CHILDREN MISBEHAVE?

— O. K. Shute
Totstown, U.S.A.

There's no use denying it.

Children do misbehave. They sometimes act in ways that are not acceptable to their parents or society. However, there are reasons for children's behaviors, and usually they are very understandable:

Looking for the cause is an important step toward discipline.

There are many reasons why children misbehave. Three of the most common are:

PARENTS MAY EXPECT TOO MUCH OF CHILDREN

Sometimes parents expect more of children than their young bodies or minds can handle:

Two-year-old Johnny's parents think that he should be toilet-trained by now and spank him if he wets his pants.

Five-year-old Susie's parents tell her to sit still when she becomes bored and fidgety during a long evening at a restaurant.

CHILDREN MAY BE DEFENDING THEIR IDENTITY

At other times, children's behaviors may be attempts to get the attention they need, or to protect their feelings or property:

Three-year-old Tommy's sister tells him the block tower he built looks silly, so he hits her.

Five-year-old Bonnie feels that her father is ignoring her when he reads the newspaper, so she turns up the volume of the television very loud.

CHILDREN MAY JUST BE TRYING TO GROW UP

Sometimes, children's efforts to learn the things their parents want them to learn seem like misbehaviors to parents:

Two-year-old Wendy knocks over her glass of milk as she tries to feed herself.

Four-year-old Mikey picks his mother a beautiful bouquet of flowers — from his neighbor's garden.

It is important to understand that children want to grow up. However, they need time to practice new skills, and they have to be told what the rules are. While they are learning, children do things in the best ways they know. Hitting another child may be the only way Jimmy knows to get him to play. Jennifer may think she's doing something good when she cuts her own hair. That's why parents need to look for what children are trying to do when they misbehave:

By identifying the cause of their misbehavior, parents can help children learn how to behave in more successful ways.

They can work toward both the long- and short-range goals of discipline.

This does not mean that parents have to like or accept children's misbehaviors. Nor does it mean that they will always be able to figure out the cause of misbehaviors. It simply means that parents should try to understand WHY a child is misbehaving before they decide HOW to respond to the behavior.

Correcting a misbehavior without treating the cause is like putting green paint on a wilted plant. Things may look better on the surface — but the problem is still there.



WHICH DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUE IS BEST?

— *U. Know*
Kiddies Korner, U.S.A.

There is no one right way to discipline.

In fact, a one-track mind is not the best way to discipline. There are a variety of ways to stop misbehaviors and encourage responsible behavior:

When parents know and use a number of techniques, they are more likely to achieve both the long- and short-term goals of discipline.

When they combine these techniques with efforts to find the causes of misbehaviors, their chances of reaching these goals will be even greater.

Here are some strategies that parents might want to include in their discipline repertoire:

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY

Let Children Make Some Decisions and Choices

One good way to teach responsibility is to give the children as much as possible.

June is helping her mother plan a party for her third birthday. Mrs. Hamning asks June to decide whether they should serve lemonade or fruit juice.

Five-year-old Jon is taking a bath and splashing water all over. His father asks: "Do you want to close the shower curtain now or wipe up the water when you finish?"

Give Reasons for Your Rules

Understanding the reasons for rules makes it easier to remember them.

On the way to the park, 3-year-old Larry runs toward the street. His father yells at him and pulls him back, then explains what might have happened if he had run into the street and why he must look both ways first.

As she is paying for her purchase at the drug store, Mrs. Gomez asks Maria to help an elderly lady open the door. Maria is looking at toys and doesn't want to go. Mrs. Gomez explains that people have to help each other, and that the woman is not strong enough to open the door.

Remove Children from Situations They Can't Handle

If children are too young to understand, or there's no way to change the cause, it may be possible to change the situation.

Nine-month-old Sacha crawls after lamp cords, ashtrays, and other dangerous items. Her parents remove such items from her reach.

Two-year-old Tommy starts crying when his older sisters won't let him join their tea party. His father takes him into the other room and plays a game with him.

Redirect Children's Behavior

Often there is a way to let children do something in a better place or a safer way.

Eighteen-month-old *Jessie* loves to knock over his cup of milk or juice and watch how it spills. His father puts him in the bathtub and gives him containers so he can pour water in and out.

When Mr. Smith takes 1-year-old *Jennifer* with him to the grocery store, she reaches for everything on the shelves. Now Mr. Smith always gives her one or two of the colorful boxes from his cart to look at and handle.

Let Children Learn What the Consequences of Their Actions Are

When a child is old enough to understand, and the results will not be dangerous, experience can sometimes be the best teacher.

Mrs. Barry warns 3-year-old *Paula* that if she keeps banging her toy truck like that it will break. *Paula* keeps banging the truck. It breaks.

Every time they go somewhere, Mr. Washington has to hurry *Roscoe* along. One day as they are getting ready to go swimming he doesn't nag at *Roscoe*. They miss the bus and have to wait half an hour in the hot sun.

Punish the Child

Scolding, light spanking, or other forms of punishment may be appropriate in some situations.

Six-month-old *Laura* crawls up to a pair of hot tongs near the outdoor grill and starts to touch them. Mrs. Walters slaps her hand and says, "No, No! Hot, Hot!"

Mr. Holbrook has told *Peter* several times not to ride his bicycle in the street. *Peter* rides out into the street again. Mr. Holbrook tells *Peter* that he may not ride his bicycle again for a week.

Remember, though, that punishment is not always the most effective way to discipline. It may achieve the short-term goal of controlling behaviors, but:

If used continually, punishment can result in negative side effects such as hostility or withdrawal.

Punishment is most effective when it is used sparingly and is applied immediately after the misbehavior. Parents should also be sure that children understand why they are being punished.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUE?

— G. Whizz
Childston, U.S.A.

O.K.

You think you know why a child is misbehaving. You are aware of the variety of techniques you can use to stop misbehavior and encourage self-discipline. So how do you know which technique to use?

There are no hard and fast rules about which discipline technique is best for which misbehavior:

The choice of method depends on the parent, the child, and the situation.

Different children respond best to different methods of discipline. Different situations call for different techniques. And parents must feel comfortable about what they are doing if discipline is to be effective.

Common sense plays a large role. For example, a parent would not allow the natural consequences to take place if a baby were about to touch a hot stove. Instead, the parents would remove the child from the situation immediately. In addition:

The age of the child makes a difference.

In general, parents will find that younger children need more direct control. They need limits set for them, and protection from harm. As children get older, parents can make more use of reasoning, choices, and natural consequences.

With discipline, as in all other areas of growth, it helps to have a sense of perspective and humor. Parents should not be surprised or upset if a child sometimes repeats a misbehavior. Children don't learn things the first time around. In the long run, though, consistent teaching will work out. Slowly but surely, children will move toward self-discipline.



FILM REVIEW SECTION

Spare the Rod

Sandy and Ted Marshall disagree about how to discipline their two children, Portia and Marc. Sandy believes in offering children reasons and choices. Ted, on the other hand, thinks children should be told what to do, and firm measures should be taken when they don't behave.

Sandy and Ted's disagreement comes to a head at Grandma's birthday party the next day. Ted's brother Sonny, whom Ted thinks is irresponsible and undisciplined, offends Grandpa with his "street language." Grandpa slaps him. Sonny is humiliated, and the whole family is upset.

In the car on the way home, Marc takes off his seat belt and Ted tells him to put it back on. When asked why, Ted replies: "Because I said so." Sandy adds: "Because if Daddy had to stop the car quickly, you might get hurt." Marc sits back and puts on his seat belt. Ted begins to understand what Sandy has been trying to tell him about discipline.

**WHAT HAS SANDY BEEN TRYING
TO TELL TED ABOUT DISCIPLINE?**



ACTIVITY PAGES

activity #1

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

For each of the following situations describe:



what you think might be the cause(s) of the misbehavior



what you would do if you were the child's parent



what the long- and short-term effects of your actions might be.

Mrs. Jones lets 2-year-old Jennie play in the backyard of their farmhouse. She tells Jennie to stay away from the tractor parked outside the barn. Mrs. Jones looks out the window to check on Jennie and sees her trying to climb onto the tractor.

Three-year-old Timmy is grocery shopping with his father, Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis is rushing around trying to finish so he can get home in time to watch the football game on TV. He looks at the list and says: "Oh, no, we forgot to get cat food and peanut butter." He tells Timmy to stay with the cart while he goes to get cat food. Timmy, however, goes off to look for peanut butter. He finds it and picks up the biggest jar. On the way back to the cart, Timmy drops the jar of peanut butter and it breaks.

Five-year-old Jose and his friend, Pedro, are playing with their cars and trucks in Jose's backyard. Jose's father, Carlos, is weeding in the garden and keeping an eye on the boys. Everything is going fine until both boys decide they need the dumptruck at the same time. They start fighting and pulling on the dumptruck.



activity #2

PUTTING THE CHILD IN CHARGE

Parents don't have to wait until their children misbehave to discipline them. Parents teach their children self-discipline by letting them make choices and decisions whenever possible.

Give at least two examples of how parents could help their children become self-disciplined in each of the following everyday situations.

Getting Dressed

Running Errands

Playtime

Supper

Housecleaning

Bed Time

activity #3 DISCIPLINE-GRAM

Fill in the missing word in each of the following sentences. Then find each of these words in the chart below. The hidden words may go up, down, from left to right, from right to left, or diagonally.

1. _____ should be a learning experience for children.
2. The long range goal of discipline is to help children move from outer to inner _____.
3. Looking for the _____ of a misbehavior is an important step toward discipline.
4. A _____ is a misbehavior that is not acceptable to a child's parents or society.
5. One of the most common causes of misbehaviors is that parents _____ more of children than they can do.
6. When children are young, parents usually need to use discipline methods that set _____ and protect them from harm.
7. As children get older, parents can make more use of reasons and _____.
8. One of the best ways to help children learn self-discipline is to give them _____.
9. If used continually, _____ can have negative side effects.
10. The discipline technique a parent uses depends on the _____, child, and situation.

R	S	T	R	O	I	V	A	H	E	B	S	I	M
A	E	Y	Q	L	P	S	D	N	A	L	B	C	E
I	K	S	W	G	E	X	P	E	C	T	Z	O	J
E	A	V	P	C	F	T	I	B	S	A	E	P	I
P	M	S	Y	O	D	H	C	T	Y	U	N	K	E
U	I	L	C	T	N	I	H	W	A	Z	I	B	D
N	F	O	Q	A	M	S	O	B	G	I	L	R	U
I	J	R	E	H	P	E	I	S	V	E	P	L	B
S	L	T	M	O	A	K	C	B	I	R	I	A	Z
H	S	N	I	C	G	O	E	P	I	M	C	S	T
M	F	O	H	W	D	Y	S	B	I	L	S	P	R
E	J	C	A	U	S	E	M	T	A	E	I	N	B
N	T	L	C	R	G	F	S	H	Q	U	D	T	R
T	N	E	R	A	P	B	A	E	D	M	R	L	Y

GRAB BAG

to do

1. Observe parents disciplining their children for misbehaviors in supermarkets, department stores, parks and playgrounds, your neighborhood, and other public places. In each case, make note of:

- how the child is misbehaving
- why the child seems to be misbehaving
- how the child is disciplined
- whether the parent's response meets the two goals of discipline
- whether you thought the child's behavior was really a misbehavior, as the parent did
- how you would have handled the situation.

Write up a summary of your observations.

2. Conduct a survey among parents in your neighborhood to find out what they think and do about discipline. Develop a short series of questions and ask everyone the same questions. Then, analyze your findings:

- Is there a consensus about discipline?
- On what points do people agree and disagree?

3. With your classmates, make a list of common misbehaviors in young children. Then beside each misbehavior, list some possible causes for each misbehavior:

- When seen next to their causes, do all of these behaviors really seem to be misbehaviors?
- What is a misbehavior?

to discuss

1. Most of us learn attitudes toward discipline from our parents. We tend to discipline our own children in the same ways we were disciplined. Usually we don't even realize we are doing this. Think of the ways you were disciplined as a child:

- What do you think you learned from each of these methods?
- Were some more effective than others?
- Which would you want to use with your own children?

2. Think back on your own experiences disciplining your children — for example, as an older brother or sister, or as a babysitter:

- What were some of the different situations you faced?
- How did you handle them?
- What methods of discipline were most successful?
- Which ones didn't work? Why?

3. Organize a classroom debate around the issue of whether or not children should be punished:

- What are the different methods of punishment?
- Are some methods of punishment better than others?

4. You are thinking of getting married. Both you and the person you are in love with want children, but you have not talked about raising them. You have been reading a lot about discipline and want to know more about how your partner feels about the subject:

- How would you start a conversation?
- What ideas would you want to discuss?

5. What can the word "discipline" mean in different contexts — for example, in the home, in school, or in the army? What kind of discipline would you want your children to learn?

GRAB BAG

to research:

1. How parents in different cultures discipline their children. You might want to focus on the differences between discipline methods in a totalitarian country like Russia and a democracy like ours. (See Urie Bronfenbrenner's *Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and USSR*.)
2. The history of discipline in this country. Have our attitudes and methods changed? In what way? Are these changes related to changes in our economy? Political knowledge about children?
3. B. F. Skinner and the behavior modification approach to discipline. (See *Skinner* by B. F. Skinner.) People who use this method of discipline believe that behavior can be changed by reinforcing desirable behaviors and ignoring undesirable behaviors.

How would you handle the situations in Activities 21 and 22 using this approach? Do you think this approach is an effective way to achieve the long and short-term goals of discipline?

4. Other methods of discipline. Some of the ones you might want to research are: Positive Reinforcement Training, contracting, mutual problem-solving and the family council.

BOOK BROWSING

Here are some books that contain more information on...

...an approach to discipline.

A Guide to Discipline. Jeannette W. Galambos. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1969. (paperback)

A Parent's Guide to Child Discipline. Rudolf Dreikurs and Loren Grey. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1970. (paperback)

...different methods of discipline.

How to Discipline with Love. Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson. New York: New American Library, 1978. (paperback)

P.E.T., Parent Effectiveness Training. Dr. Thomas Gordon. New York: New American Library, 1970. (paperback)

...other perspectives on discipline.

Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R. Urie Bronfenbrenner. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970. (paperback)

Walden Two. B. F. Skinner. New York: Macmillan, 1948. (paperback)

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